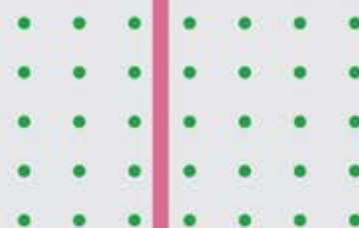
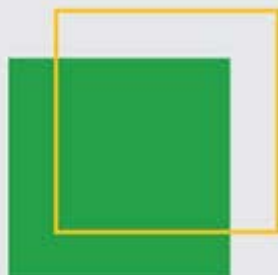


**Analysis of Online Teacher  
and Public Surveys  
Conducted by Manitoba's  
Commission on Kindergarten  
to Grade 12 Education**



March 2020



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# INTRODUCTION

As part of its public engagement and consultation process, Manitoba's Commission on Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education developed two on-line surveys. One survey was designed specifically to collect input from Manitoba teachers on issues important to them and the other was designed to gather broader input from the public at large.

Both surveys were available on the Commission's website between April 17 and May 31, 2019.

This report provides an analysis of the findings from both the teacher and public surveys and an overview of the attributes and demographic information of survey respondents.

## THE TEACHER SURVEY

In total, 1,260 Manitoba teachers responded to the Commission's on-line survey to specifically gather input from Manitoba teachers.

To ensure that responses to this survey were received only from Manitoba teachers, including retired teachers, respondents were required to use their Manitoba teacher certification number to access the survey. A privacy statement was provided on the survey site advising respondents that they would not be personally identified in the analysis and reporting of the survey findings.

### Teacher Survey Respondent Attributes and Demographics

*Table 1: Self-identified age categories of respondents*

Age category	Percentage
• 25 years or under	4
• 26 to 35 years of age	31
• 36 to 50 years of age	43
• 51 years of age or over	22

*Table 2: Current certified teaching status of respondents*

Status as a certified teacher	Percentage
• Currently employed as a certified teacher	96
• Not currently employed as a certified teacher	2
• Retired from teaching	2

*Table 3: Years of experience as a certified teacher*

Years of experience as a certified teacher	Percentage
• Five years or less	18
• Six to 15 years	38
• 16 to 24 years	24
• 25 years or more	20

Table 4: Primary teaching and work responsibility of respondents

Proportion of respondents, currently working as a certified teacher, who identified that they were primarily working:	Percentage
• in early years (Kindergarten to Grade 4)	27
• in middle years (Grades 5–8)	20
• in high school (Grades 9–12)	25
• as a school level administrator (principal or vice-principal)	6
• as a specialist or consultant <sup>1</sup>	8
• as a school division administrator	2
• in some combination of the above <sup>2</sup>	7
• in another capacity <sup>3</sup>	5

Table 5: Proportion of respondents indicating that they had worked in the following types of schools

School type	Percentage
• Public	97
• Funded independent	11
• Non-funded independent	3
• First Nations (federal jurisdiction)	5

Note: Respondents had the option to select “all that apply”.

Table 6: Proportion of respondents, working in the public school system, who indicated that they had worked or taught in the following programs

Public school program	Percentage
• English	87
• French Immersion	18
• Français	2
• Technology Education	3

Note: Respondents had the option to select “all that apply”.

Table 7: Proportion of respondents who worked as a certified teacher in northern, rural and/or urban schools

Region	Percentage
• Northern	10
• Rural	68
• Urban	47

Note: Respondents had the option to select “all that apply”.

Table 8: Education level of teacher survey respondents

Education level attained	Percentage
• Bachelors degree	67
• Masters degree	17
• Ph. D	1
• Other <sup>4</sup>	15

<sup>1</sup> Most common responses included: guidance counselors, music specialists, clinicians, and resource teachers.

<sup>2</sup> Most common responses included: K to 4, K to 8, K to 12, substitute teachers, teaching principals, and other similar combinations.

<sup>3</sup> Examples included substitute teachers and other support teachers.

<sup>4</sup> The most common response under this category was post-baccalaureate.

## Overview of Findings from the Teacher Survey

The following summaries are taken from responses to open-ended questions in the teacher survey and indicate the most common themes throughout each individual question, as well as the entire survey.

### Summary of Key Points across the Teacher Survey

- A. **Class size.** The most prevalent theme across the teacher survey responses was class size. Teachers were remarkably consistent in stating their beliefs that smaller class sizes (often estimated at 20 to 25 students, but varied by grade) produced better outcomes for students and teachers. When asked what needed to be improved to help teachers, the most common responses were about class size and composition. Most teachers linked class size to the increasingly diverse needs and complexity of their class compositions. Teachers repeatedly raised examples of the challenges students bring with them to the classroom, providing examples such as mental health issues, poverty, behavioural issues, and diverse other challenges (e.g., meeting the needs of students with special needs and those who are newcomers, immigrants, or Indigenous).
- B. **Support.** Closely tied to the issue of class size was the theme of support. Teachers reported that expectations to meet the demands of increasingly large and complex classes with inadequate support resulted in poor outcomes for all. They responded that managing students with diverse and challenging needs requires increasing amounts of time, leaving insufficient time to prepare and plan, as well as teach the others effectively; or, to spend one-on-one time to develop good relationships with all students. When teachers reported feeling supported, they mentioned the presence of EAs and other professionals such as social workers or psychologists to manage challenging students, as well as being valued and supported by their senior administration in the school and within the school division.
- C. **Professional development (PD) and professional learning.** There were mixed responses to the questions about professional learning. The current system is reportedly working well for some teachers, but not for others. The responses indicate wide variation in availability and accessibility of professional learning. Some teachers reported opportunities for out-of-province travel, others reported having few opportunities even within their division. Some reported that PD opportunities for those in rural areas or specialty areas (e.g., French and music) were inadequately funded or unavailable. Teachers stated that they wanted more input into the options chosen for PD, and that they preferred practical (applied) learning and learning tailored to their specific teaching focus rather than theoretical or general options. Teachers consistently responded that they preferred autonomy or having choice about their learning opportunities rather than having them standardized or mandated. Collaboration with colleagues was highly valued.
- D. **Funding.** Funding was usually raised in the context of one of the other themes. For example, decreased or insufficient funding was linked to class size and inadequate supports in the classroom with teachers raising concerns about the effects on the students in the short term (e.g., academic performance) and long term (i.e., future citizens), as well as the effects on teachers (workload and stress). Funding was also linked to PD. For instance, inconsistent funding for PD across school divisions, inadequate funding for PD and related costs, out-of-pocket fees for required PD, and so on were all referenced. There was some mention of concerns about funding related to teacher salaries.
- E. **School division amalgamation.** This topic was raised most frequently in the “Additional comments” section, with mixed responses. Although some teachers strongly favoured amalgamation (as a cost-savings measure), most teachers commenting on amalgamation were against it, preferring retention of the current divisions to better suit local context and meet local needs.



## Summary of Key Points for Specific Questions in the Teacher Survey

### Question 1: What is working for you as a teacher?

- i. **Smaller class sizes.** Teachers consistently reported that it worked well for them—and their students—to have smaller, reasonable, or manageable class sizes. Benefits of smaller class sizes often noted included:
- spending more time on individual student needs, especially in classrooms with high needs and/or diversity
  - developing strong relationships with students
  - estimates of ideal class size were often included, ranging from 20 to 25 students

*“My class size is currently 22, and that enables me to conference with students frequently and to give immediate meaningful feedback to nudge learning forward.”*

*“I feel I can better reach all students in my class and provide them with the support they need to grow as learners.”*

- ii. **PD.** Another topic commonly reported as working well for teachers was having good PD opportunities. In response to Question 1, teachers mentioned “professional development,” “professional development opportunities,” or “professional learning opportunities.” Teachers described the effects of PD opportunities in terms of:
- increasing their effectiveness as a teacher
  - benefits of learning from their colleagues
  - benefits to students

*“I have had access to professional development and have had the opportunity to sit on a curriculum development committee at Mb Ed. I value the experience and professionalism of my colleagues and the fact that my school division's superintendent's team and locally elected school board value teachers, our knowledge about students, and our ability to make judgements that lead to high quality education for the students in our care.”*

*“My job is easiest when my administration and division supports me in what I do and in the professional development that I wish to pursue.”*

- iii. **Support.** A common theme reported by teachers throughout their responses of what was working for them as a teacher was “support.”

*“Collaborating, team teaching, and sharing ideas with colleagues (other classroom teachers and learning support teachers); integrating subject areas into cohesive units; teaching using hands-on and inquiry based pedagogy; keeping parents informed of student strengths, challenges, and behaviour outside of parent teacher conference times; engaging students through clubs and extracurricular activities (e.g. yoga club, jiggling club); attending professional development opportunities regularly; accessing resources such as books and videos through resource libraries; having 2 personal days per year.”*

*“I work in a division where I feel supported by school administration, as well as at the divisional level.”*

### Question 2: What needs to be improved for you as a teacher?

- i. **Class sizes.** Class size was the most prevalent response that teachers said needed to be improved for them, consistently naming the need for smaller (reasonable, manageable) class sizes.

*“More teachers and smaller class sizes would allow teachers to more effectively program for and support the increasing number and intensity of needs found in our classrooms (students who have experienced trauma, students living in poverty, English language learners, newcomers, students with learning disabilities, additional needs, etc.).*

*“Class size caps from k-12 need to be introduced, allowing teachers to develop better relationships with students, to better teach and assess them, and to attend to their varying interests and needs.”*

- ii. **Support for complex, diverse student needs.** Teachers described the compounding effect of larger classes and the challenges they faced because of the complexity of diverse student needs. They reported inadequate supports to handle these challenges effectively, resulting in negative effects on all students and adding considerable stress for teachers already feeling strapped for time. They also reported appreciating the support provided by student services staff as well as by EAs.

*“More support in classrooms and schools would always be helpful; Having more guidance counselors to address the array of mental health needs of children in our schools, having more resource teachers to help with students who have special needs or who are learning English as an additional language, having more time to prepare lessons and assessments, having more time to write report cards, having more parental support and having more supports out there for families who are struggling with poverty and/or mental health, and/or other family issues.”*

*“Smaller class sizes, more supportive administrators, full time EA support without moving educational assistants around as often, more opportunities for professional development.”*

*“We need more support services—more psychologists, social workers, literacy support workers etc. We have a growing amount of needs in our classroom, with no more support.”*

- iii. **Time.** Another topic teachers reported as needing improvement to help them as a teacher was time. This topic was closely related to the topics of class size, PD, EA support, other professional support, and funding. Teachers reported juggling conflicting priorities. Examples included needing to take time for challenging students resulting in not enough time for other students and one-on-one time, balancing non-teaching tasks to support students or time spent in PD with teaching time, or the stress of spending personal time planning and writing report cards.

*“The amount of time we have to complete the curriculum and the additional tasks goes down. It is unrealistic and unacceptable to expect teachers to be able to deal with large class sizes, including students with diverse and demanding needs, while completing all the required assessments and evaluations, and complete the entire MB curriculum.”*

*“Class size—it needs to go back down to manageable numbers. We need more funding for aids and help in the classroom for behaviour management. We need funding in order to have full time social workers and psychologists/guidance counselors in every school.”*

**Question 3: What is working for you in terms of professional learning opportunities for you as a teacher?**

- i. **Preferences and choice.** Teachers indicated consistent preferences for professional learning or PD that included:
- having choice or autonomy about their learning opportunities
  - learning within their specialty area (e.g., French, music, math...)
  - applied or practical learning with some mention of the value of teachers learning how to deal with diverse student needs (e.g., learning disabilities, mental health, or poverty)

*“My school division has provided me with professional development sessions led by trained colleagues that have been valuable and allowed for some time with colleagues from different schools (collaborative learning group) to meet, evaluate resources, share materials and plan for specific pursuits (e.g. reading methodologies for students with dyslexia).”*

*“Our school division provides an equitable opportunity to attend and participate in sessions both locally and beyond; it is great to have these opportunities to learn and grow in our profession. Sessions that focus on practical strategies that can be employed by teachers are preferred as well as those that help teachers understand about the daily challenges that our students face.”*

*"It is important that the PD they select and attend is their choice! When a teacher is 'forced' to attend PD, due to provincial or divisional mandates, this PD is limited in its effectiveness and rarely supports classroom instruction!"*

- ii. **Collaboration.** Teachers see collaboration with colleagues as one of the most effective forms of PD.

*"Collaboration with teachers who are currently teaching is the most effective professional development."*

*"Having the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in my own school. With the opportunity to use release time to collaborate, my colleagues and I have had the opportunity to put a ton of work into our courses to ensure we are using strategies we learned from PD, which in turn has created consistency throughout our program."*

*"We are fortunate enough to have some very meaningful PD opportunities at our school with our staff. It is helpful and meaningful when we use it as a chance to collaborate together and share our ideas with each other."*

- iii. **Satisfaction and appreciation for PD.** Most respondents appreciated the professional learning opportunities made available to them within their school division. Professional learning opportunities offered by the union (MTS, ÉFM) tended to be appreciated. The services offered by the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium (mRLC) were also identified as being appreciated.

*"The divisional PD days are working in terms of professional learning opportunities, because they are small and personalized to the needs of the specific community of learners."*

*"The MTS/ÉFM PD day." (Originally submitted in French)*

*"The ÉFM/MTS holds an annual professional development day that is essential for us."*

*The opportunity to work with a Critical Friend from the Manitoba Rural Learning Consortium (mRLC) has been key in moving our school forward, as we worked to adopt Learning Sprints into our PLC, and increase academic performance in the area of writing. The Numeracy Action Research Project through the mRLC has been super PD to increase our student's academic performance in the area of Math, and incorporates the work we are doing in the area of Learning Sprints. All of the mRLC sessions consist of high-quality PD, and they are really appreciated. They have done a magnificent job of organizing this PD [...] and many of our teachers look forward to this PD.*

Although they were fewer than the positive responses, there were some responses indicating dissatisfaction. These tended to be about perceived inequitable professional learning opportunities across school divisions, or lack of choice for tailored learning.

*"Our PD is too limited; no time or funding available for PD that is more personalized for our jobs and subject areas. We all have to take the same PD and it is not relevant for all teachers."*

*"Most training is limited to English; our educational culture is Francophone and must therefore be transmitted in French first and not by default."*

**Question 4: What needs to change in terms of professional learning opportunities for you as a teacher?**

- i. **PD relevance; input into PD opportunities; choice.** Teachers wanted more consultation and involvement in PD decisions such as grade level, subject, and topics being offered. They wanted to avoid "one size fits all" and focus on content and hands-on learning.

*"I think some PD that is taught doesn't apply to all teachers/subject areas. It seems time could be better spent in these situations (for example, do phys ed. teachers need to learn about the latest math trends and teaching strategies?)."*



*"The expectation that all teachers need to jump on the 'next big bandwagon' thing."*

*"I believe for professional development to be beneficial, educators need access to programs that are not a 1 and done system, but rather a multi session, or multi-year program with regular check-ins."*

- ii. **Preferences and choice.** Teachers indicated consistent preferences for professional learning or development that included:

- having choice or autonomy about their learning opportunities.
- more specialized PD for physical education or vocational teachers, or teachers wanting to learn within their specialty area (e.g., French, music, math...). Many suggested less whole school or division focus.
- teachers wanted PD that included actual strategies and real-life applications they could bring back to their classroom. Some mentioned the value of teachers learning how to deal with diverse student needs (e.g., learning disabilities, mental health, or poverty).
- release time and learning with and from colleagues was valued. Teachers wanted to work and network with other teachers to learn from them.

*"Learning opportunities need to be reflective of the needs in my area which include working with at risk students due to poverty, home environment and mental health. More opportunities for teachers to select PD in an area that is of interest to them (similar to MTS PD Day). Offering PD as 2 parts sessions - an initial session is offered, teachers are given time to "try and apply" and then a second follow up session is offered to address any next steps, questions, etc. Having release time for teachers to collaborate with each other - both within the same school, and also in different schools/school divisions."*

*"We need even more release time to learn about emerging learning topics and there needs to be more professional development around LGBTQ ideas, Indigenous topics, and issues of race in Canada."*

*"I would like professional development opportunities to focus more on strategies that can be immediately implemented in the classroom rather than talking about theories."*

*"Give teachers more autonomy. The most rewarding professional learning opportunities are personalized experiences in which teachers set their own goals and develop a plan to achieve them. It is especially useful to observe colleagues in action, to see them give a lesson and discuss it afterward. It is also beneficial to invite a colleague into the classroom to observe a lesson." (Originally submitted in French)*

- iii. **Financial support for PD.** Teachers reported that due to funding, PD opportunities vary between divisions, and rural/northern divisions have to account for travel and hotel costs when seeking lengthy PD. Some commented that most PD is Winnipeg-based and this makes it inaccessible for them. Teachers stated that PD often involves teachers paying out of pocket (e.g., MTS PD day involves fees for almost every session that are not covered, nor are the travel costs). Some stated that when they seek out post-baccalaureate and masters programs they pay out-of-pocket, and any time out of the classroom they have to pay for a substitute. These teachers viewed this as "paying to go to work."

*"This is an area of frustration for me. In my school division there are extremely limited opportunities for me as a specialist to engage in professional development opportunities. As a specialist who works with children with a multitude of disabilities, professional development opportunities are crucial in order for me to stay current and relevant in my position. It is frustrating when some teachers in other divisions get \$5000 towards professional development every two-three years, yet I have to plead with my administrator to spend her limited PD budget to send me to [...]. Professional development opportunities need to be EQUAL across the province. Opportunities to travel to conferences to engage with other professionals and learn from some of the greatest minds in education needs to be a priority."*

*"Each school has its own method of deciding how to spend PD money. It needs to be guided better."*

*"Money we have for PD does not always cover the cost of a sub and registration costs. At one time I would just cover this myself and not worry about it. However, now I have a family and cannot afford to. I spend lots of my own money on my students as it is. I can't do this anymore."*

*"What about the teachers who are not taking any PD because it's a hassle to go through the application process and pay for it out of pocket before being reimbursed? This can take months before you get reimbursed, meanwhile the payment is sitting on your visa, waiting."*

*"Teachers should not have to pay out of their own pockets to attend the MTS PD day. I can't think of any other government employee who would be expected to spend money out of their own pocket to attend mandatory training sessions."*

*"Teachers shouldn't have to pay for PDs that they attend (For example, SAGE day is mandatory but the sessions are expensive. We shouldn't have to pay to go to work)."*

**Question 5: Please provide any additional comments you wish to share in this space.**

- i. **Funding.** Discussion was consistent about the effects of funding cuts on the classroom. Several respondents also expressed concerns about the current salary freeze.

*"I think the removal of the classroom size cap and the cutting of funding for education is detrimental to our children. The government is cutting services which are essential to the changing needs of our communities. Children are coming to school with more and more needs, and we need to change to better support their needs. We need MORE support for our students. We need smaller classes, more training for teachers to support [our] students and ourselves. We need to feel like we are valued by our government."*

*"I am disappointed in my government's decisions to freeze teacher salaries, to cut funding, resources, and learning opportunities from our children who will one day be the same people who we will all rely on [when] we get older."*

- ii. **Class sizes and the complexity of student needs require more support, and better teacher training.** This topic continued to prevail in this question, with similar description of the needs and effects of inadequate supports for students. The need for additional support was often raised, as well as better teacher preparation.

*"Currently, I have an extremely complex group of students. Despite having a small group, access to EA support, a supportive team and positive working relations in my school, it is one of the most challenging years of my career. Teaching is a difficult job, and I worry that increased demands on teachers' time and reduced supports will lead to burnout. I worry that mandated assessment practices and a focus on student 'achievement' in the form of tests will lessen our ability to differentiate and meet student academic and social emotional needs. I hope that any changes made to our educational system are reflective of a diverse, complex and rapidly changing student population, and provide teachers with more supports (human, training and time) and not increased demands."*

*"I feel class size and make-up really make or break it for a teacher. One child can really affect the emotional health and academic learning potential of an entire classroom. It is time to look at what is best for everyone! When you put an emotionally unstable or physically or verbally violent student in a classroom (even with an assistant) and add in several other needs such as a child with autism, a couple with emotional issues and another couple hyperactive students what is the cost? All the other students that come to school wanting to learn get put on the back burner because your time and energy gets used up with the loud, attention-seeking students. This is far too often becoming the norm. Class composition needs to be a priority or teachers will burn out and students' learning will continue to suffer."*

*"The province should also consider looking at the teacher training program. The present model does not adequately prepare teacher candidates to meet the demands of the job. Faculty advisors are filled with individuals who are looking to make an extra dollar. I would suggest that the practicum teaching experience reflect more of an apprentice type program and do away with the present 4 and 6 week teaching block."*

- iii. **Workload and stress.** Teachers consistently reported that the combination of increasing class sizes and challenging classroom compositions, with inadequate supports, resulted in increased stress.

*"I have found that there has been an increase in the stresses of the job, and it is important to provide services to support teachers in the classroom. More access to resources is important to improve student learning."*

*"Class sizes have been increasing, expectations set by the government have been increasing resulting in an impossible work load - meanwhile pay is not increasing."*

*"Many of my colleagues and I are quickly burning out and are losing our passion for this career due to the increased work load, job demands, and programming requirements for students with complex learning and social-emotional needs. Things in the educational system must improve and change to better support students, but also to protect the well-being and mental health of educational staff."*

- iv. **School divisions and amalgamation.** Amalgamation of school divisions was mentioned more in this question than any other in the survey. Responses about amalgamation were mixed, with more against amalgamation than pro amalgamation. Some responses were cautionary, adding terms and conditions to amalgamation.

*"I have heard many discussions about the amalgamation of school divisions in attempt to save money. This is the worst decision that a government could ever initiate. If you care one bit for children and their teachers, you would have looked deeply into how each unique division responds differently to the culture and needs of their specific communities and schools - and you would have noticed that each division has taken a unique direction in terms of how they respond to education in their division."*

*"I'm fine with amalgamating divisions. There's too much redundancy. 5 or 6 would be fine: 1 for Winnipeg, 1 for SE Manitoba based out of Steinbach, 1 for the SW corner based out of Brandon, 1 for the Interlake based out of Dauphin, 1 for the north based out of Thompson, and a French school division. The savings in capital costs, building maintenance, and support staff/custodial staff salaries should be rolled into classrooms (as in, get us laptop computers for EVERY kid in high school)."*

*"I do believe that the province could save money if the metro divisions were amalgamated. Much of the high cost salaries of superintendents and assistant superintendents, consultants, school trustees, etc. could save money."*

*"There are many ways to save money and cut corners. Amalgamation could definitely be one. One city wide school division could be a start. Cutting the upper administration costs across the board would help."*

*"I find it interesting there has been no mention of school divisions. Amalgamation would be something I would support both as a teacher and as a parent. The divisions are bloated with ill-informed elected officials managing billions of dollars and all repeating each others' work. In addition, it would increase teacher mobility, which is always a good thing."*

- v. **French language leadership.** Several French language respondents commented on the leadership role the Bureau de l'éducation française needs to play in support of French-language education.

*"I want the BEF to be reinstated because our French curricula will become translations. We have fought to keep our language and, without the BEF, I am afraid that we will have to keep on fighting. Given that there are two official languages in this country, we should not have to fight." (Originally submitted in French)*

# THE PUBLIC SURVEY

In total, 8,891 people responded to the on-line public survey to share their views and preferences with the Commission.

Similar to the teacher survey, a privacy statement was provided on the survey site assuring respondents that they would not be personally identified in the analysis and reporting of the survey findings.

## Public Survey Respondent Attributes and Demographics

*Table 9: Proportion of public survey respondents by age category*

Age category	Percentage
• 18 years or under	4
• 19 to 29 years	10
• 30 to 39 years	29
• 40 to 49 years	29
• 50 to 64 years	18
• 65 years or over	6
• Prefer not to respond	4

*Table 10: Proportion of public survey respondents by geographical region*

Region	Percentage
• Northern	3
• Rural	40
• Urban	57

*Table 11: Proportion of respondents answering primarily as a student, parent/guardian, community member, or “other”*

Answering primarily as a	Percentage
• Student	6
• Parent or guardian	58
• Community member	29
• Other	6

- Of the 568 respondents who identified as students, 65 percent identified as high school students and 35 percent as post-secondary students.
- Of the 4,287 respondents who identified as parents, 11 percent were parents of preschoolers, 84 percent were parents of school-age children, and 5 percent indicated that they had a child in post-secondary education or training. (Note: Parents were able to select more than one student age group).

There were 3,145 respondents: 35 percent of all public survey responses indicated that they worked in the education sector. The proportion of these 3,145 respondents by self-identified primary role is shown in *Table 12*.

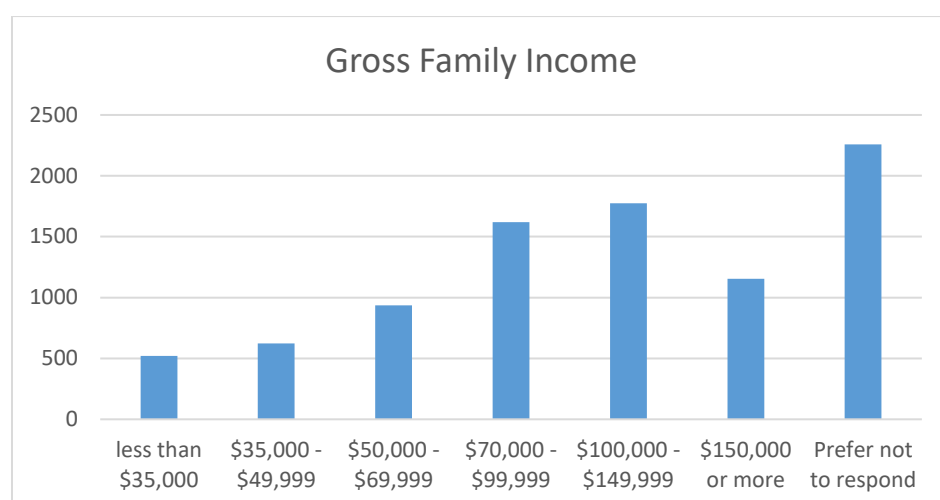
Table 12: Proportion of respondents who work in the education sector, by primary role

Primary role	Percentage
• Teacher	38
• Principal or vice-principal	2
• School division staff	16
• School board trustee	3
• Other	42

The most frequent “other” roles identified were EAs and early childhood educators. Other roles identified were wide-ranging, including: clinicians, social workers, library technicians, guidance counsellors, community health professionals, child care providers, lunch supervisors, custodians, and bus drivers as well as instructors, professors, and support staff from post-secondary institutions.

In terms of gross family income, 25 percent of respondents choose “prefer not to respond”. Of the 6,629 respondents who chose to respond regarding their gross family income, the numbers of responses by income level are shown in *Chart 1*.

Chart 1: Gross family income of public survey respondents



## Overview of Findings from the Public Survey

The following summaries are taken from responses to the open-ended questions in the public survey, and indicate the most common themes throughout each individual question, as well as the entire survey.

### Summary of Key Points across the Public Survey

- A. **Class sizes.** One of the most predominant and consistent themes across the survey was class sizes. Respondents who raised the issue of class sizes were virtually unanimous in their views that smaller, reasonable, or manageable class sizes (reported as 20 to 25 students on average) were essential for teachers and students; and, large class sizes contribute to poor outcomes for all. Respondents reiterated the importance of small class sizes when describing the increasingly complex and diverse student needs of today's classrooms, repeatedly raising issues like poverty, mental health, and special needs.

**Note:** When applicable for specific public survey questions “class sizes” is noted as a key point but without additional quotes or comments to illustrate the prevalence of this topic as a theme throughout the survey. The comments noted in this section are sufficiently consistent that additional reporting would yield little new information.

*“I like the smaller class sizes as it gives more one on one direction for children that are struggling but also for the kids that are advanced.”*

*“Too many diverse needs in one class without appropriate supports. Near impossible for teacher to work with each group (by diverse groups, I mean, behavioral issues, with too wide learning gaps, with different language needs). In the younger years where behavioural and learning gaps in students are not yet identified or mitigating strategies are not yet developed – smaller class size should be mandatory to assist teachers.”*

*“There are no sweeping changes that could improve equitability. We live in a world that has systems in place designed to make the gap larger (i.e., inequitable). However, I believe smaller class sizes and more support for students would be an excellent place to start.*

*“Teachers have too many students to address all the learning disabilities, behaviour issues, and learning differences to properly teach a classroom full.”*

*“Class compositions/sizes based on student needs rather than numbers.”*

- B. **School divisions and school boards.** Survey respondents did not always differentiate between these terms, and often linked their comments together (e.g., “school divisions and boards should....”). For this reason, the terms were retained and treated as one subject within this report.

In addition, the wording of some questions allowed comments only for those who responded “yes” to the need for change (see Q5a & Q5b). This means that the open-ended comments do not reflect the views of those who said “no” to the need for change. Because comments about current structures were specifically sought in these questions, the summary of comments reported about school divisions, boards, and the department must be interpreted reflecting this bias. In other words, the comments are heavily weighted in favour of those who responded that school divisions, boards, and the department need to change and may not be representative of all survey respondents.

Across the survey there were generally two categories of opinion about school divisions and school boards; those who were in favour of reducing the number of divisions and boards (summarized here as “pro-amalgamation”) and those in favour of retaining the current system (summarized here as “against amalgamation”). There were more “pro-amalgamation” responses, as expected, given the caveats outlined previously. There were some, but fewer, respondents who suggested moderate approaches to change.

Concerns raised within these categories include:

- Pro-amalgamation: reduce school divisions, reduce or eliminate school boards, review roles and board composition requirements, accountability and transparency of decision-making—this will save costs for what is perceived as top-heavy administrative positions and roles perceived as ineffective and redundant.
- Against amalgamation: retain current, smaller school divisions and boards to maintain local voice and ensure education represents and meets local needs.
- Moderate approach to change: review and assess the current system; make rational, purposeful decisions about change.

C. **Education system; school system; educational system.** The phrase “education system” was often used in the question wording and so is frequently represented in the responses and associated with the focus of the question (e.g., “strengths of the education system” or “weaknesses of the education system”). The topics raised about the education system often overlap with other topics (e.g., school divisions and boards, governance, funding, taxes). In addition to the discussion about school divisions and boards (previously summarized), comments about the education system also encompassed:

- Strengths: teachers; inclusive education; responsiveness to local context.
- Weaknesses: insufficient support for teachers and students; lack of emphasis on traditional academic subjects (math, reading, writing); lack of emphasis on non-traditional subjects (arts, languages); students graduating who are ill-prepared for “real life”.
- Governance: more transparency, accountability and consistency across school divisions and boards; role of the department.
- Funding and taxes: how education is funded (less contribution from property taxes, more funding from government), redistribution of funding to provide equal opportunities across divisions.

D. **Support: support staff; enough support; additional support.** The need for support was centred around teachers and students and often accompanied by positive descriptions about teachers. The comments were highly consistent across the data, and focused on either “not enough support” or “the need for more support”. Examples of the support commonly stated in the responses included:

- Support for teachers: educate and sufficiently prepare new teachers and hold them to high professional standards; equip teachers with the resources, EAs, additional training, PD, reasonable class sizes, and time required to meet the complex mix of diverse student needs (special needs, mental health, poverty, new immigrants).
- Support for students: equip them with skills (critical thinking, life, and math) to prepare them to be effective, responsible, employable citizens.

E. **Student success, skills, learning outcomes:** The definition of student success and learning outcomes emerged as complex concepts in the survey responses. This may reflect the wording of some questions (e.g., Q6.b).

- Many responses about student success and learning outcomes focused on ensuring students had a solid foundation of “the basics” (i.e., traditional academic subjects of math, reading, and writing). Some responses indicated a more progressive approach was desirable (e.g., focus more on arts, languages, and non-traditional forms of education).
- The topic of learning outcomes was often viewed as highly individual—that is, success needed to be defined on a student-by-student basis, although some respondents suggested the need for goals and standards.
- Respondents often mentioned the need for students to graduate with knowledge, skills, and attitudes that prepared them for “real life.” In addition to the basics, the responses indicated that the school system should help equip students with attributes to help them succeed in everyday life including problem solving, critical thinking, employability, personal finances, etc.



- Comments about responsibility for student success suggested that the responsibility varied with the age and stage of the student, and that the roles of different stakeholder groups take precedence at different ages and stages of student development. For example, parents and teachers may be more important at younger ages, but the responsibility of the student increased with age and maturity. Many comments used phrases like, “it takes a village” or a community “team effort” to achieve student success.

### Summary of Key Points for Specific Questions in the Public Survey

#### Question 1: In your view what are the strengths of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system in Manitoba?

- Teachers.** One of the most common strengths of the K–12 Manitoba education system cited by the public survey respondents was the teachers. The word “teachers” was used frequently with positive descriptors such as: caring; great; good; excellent; passionate; dedicated; amazing. In addition to their appreciation of teachers, respondents often cited the dedication of school administration and support staff as a strength.

*“Staff who really care about kids at all levels and volunteer in many capacities to help kids reach their potential; Opportunities for students to be exposed to extra curricular activities (sport, academic or vocational in focus); a school board whose members consider the needs of their schools as well as taking into consideration the communities they serve.”*

*“Great teachers who care about their students and are willing to give of their own time to provide students with valuable experiences and learning outside of the classroom, in addition to what they are teaching during school hours.”*

*“I can't speak to the overall impression, but I can say that I have come into contact with several passionate and committed educators working in Manitoba.”*

- Education system.** The current K–12 education or school system, including the current school divisions and boards, were frequently mentioned as strengths. Many respondents reported that the current system responds to their context (i.e., the school divisions and boards understand their communities and respond to their needs). Inclusive education that responds to individual needs was also reported as a strength; as were opportunities for students to participate in various programs such as physical education, French Immersion Program, music, arts, breakfast programs, etc.

*“In my opinion, the strengths within the education system include: Inclusive and equitable learning communities that promote students to become lifelong learners; Learning that is diverse and reflects the society around us.”*

- Local context.** Many respondents reported the current school divisions and boards as a strength because the people within them understand, represent, and are able to respond to the local context. This was often noted in discussion about smaller divisions (including the Division scolaire franco-manitobaine) and rural communities.

*“Local autonomy with school boards; specialized programming; vocational programming; video conferencing so students can remain in rural schools but still have access to classes offered elsewhere; local taxing ability for school divisions to ensure needs within the divisions are being met.”*

*“The opportunity for us as parents to have a say in our children's education. Through the ability to elect trustees into the school board, the open communication with the school board, open communication with the staff at the schools I am able to participate in making decisions of what and how my children are taught. With the various school boards, the communities are able to customize education to the needs of that area within provincial guidelines, especially in rural areas. I would hate for any of this to be taken away.”*

*“Our school system is strong because our local residents have a voice in shaping it. Our school system is also strong because we can choose our own representatives to govern our schools. People who know the community and local area. People who are invested within the community and school.”*



*“Strengths: Inclusive classrooms and schools where there is a place for every child; education that pushes critical thinking, reflection, metacognitive reasoning, transformative pedagogy; passionate teachers that go above and beyond their duties and what is written in their contracts; extracurricular activities such as sports, moccasin/Aboriginal circle, chess club, bike club, financial club, debate club, LGBTQ groups, etc. Course options for students such as music, wood working, shops, foods and nutrition, sewing, arts, and other important and beneficial life skills; Français and French Immersion schools, and Spanish Immersion schools.”*

*“Having a French division, governed by the Francophones, for the Francophones is critically important for the Francophone community to ensure the protection and growth (enhancement) of the language and of the culture.” (Originally submitted in French)*

iv. **Class sizes<sup>5</sup>.**

**Question 2: In your view what are the weaknesses of the Kindergarten to Grade 12 education system in Manitoba?**

- i. **Insufficient support.** Many responses to this question can be categorized as insufficient support for teachers and students, especially students who require extra time and attention due to challenges such as special needs, mental health, or behavioural issues.

*“Teachers cannot possibly give their students the attention they need; especially when they are expected to teach/reach/help kids with special needs and no funding is available for additional help.”*

*“Teachers and staff are struggling to meet the unique needs of students with physical and mental health issues, special needs, and those dealing with poverty and trauma, sometimes all within one possibly overcrowded classroom.”*

- ii. **Education system.** Respondents’ comments about the education system or the school system were generally that the system was ineffective. The weaknesses reported tended to be in either one of two categories: traditional or non-traditional concepts of education. Weaknesses stated about traditional concepts of education referred to the need to “get back to the basics” (i.e., math, reading, writing, life skills). In contrast, those in favour of non-traditional concepts of education criticized the emphasis on “the basics” and the lack of opportunities for non-traditional education. Another commonly stated weakness was the practice of passing students onto the next grade regardless of student readiness. This was perceived to be lowering the standards of education. Many responses mentioned social issues (e.g., behaviour, religion, poverty) or parental responsibility for education.

*“I think a weakness of our education system in Manitoba is that we are no longer focusing on educating our students with basic life skills, such as reading and writing.”*

*“The education system as of now deals with a very old view on what education is (math, science, English) and not what it is developing into other parts of the world where they take classes in non-traditional areas (outdoor education, dance, sign language, languages, culture, folklore, recreation, etc.).”*

*“Weaknesses of the education system are class sizes, lack of behavioral supports, lack of funding for educational assistants for high needs children, lack of affordable breakfast and lunch programs, budget cuts being taken from programming and supports but not from salaries of superintendents and directors.”*

*“I think that many students are being pushed through their grades without actually mastering the skills required.”*

*“The no fail position set forth by administration has undermined the once high standards of this province.”*

<sup>5</sup> See explanatory note on class size under item A on p. 14.

- iii. **School divisions and boards.** Responses about the school divisions and school boards indicated beliefs that school divisions are top heavy with administration staff; have too many supporting roles that are out of touch with teachers at the front line; and, too many school boards lack accountability and are an extra cost that does not add value.

*"Budget cuts by provincial government, too much money and power allotted to school boards/trustees rather than teachers, unequal resources available for remote/poor/northern schools, private schools not held accountable for teachings counter to Manitoba curriculum (religious beliefs over scientific facts), conformity, and lack of support for teachers."*

*"Far too many superintendents, administrators, school boards and trustees for the student population currently in the province of Manitoba in comparison to most other provinces in the country."*

*"The school divisions are extremely "top heavy" and not enough is going to the teachers actually teaching and the much needed programming in the schools."*

- iv. **Learning for life.** Most responses about "skills" suggested too many students were graduating from school inadequately prepared for life, giving examples of what they thought the education system should provide.

*"I think a weakness of our education system in Manitoba is that we are no longer focusing on educating our students with basic life skills, such as reading and writing."*

*"As a small business employer, we hire after school help and we have been shocked to find Grade 10-12 students who can not do basic mental math. Writing skills, including spelling and grammar, are at about a Gr. 2-3 level. How are these students graduating?"*

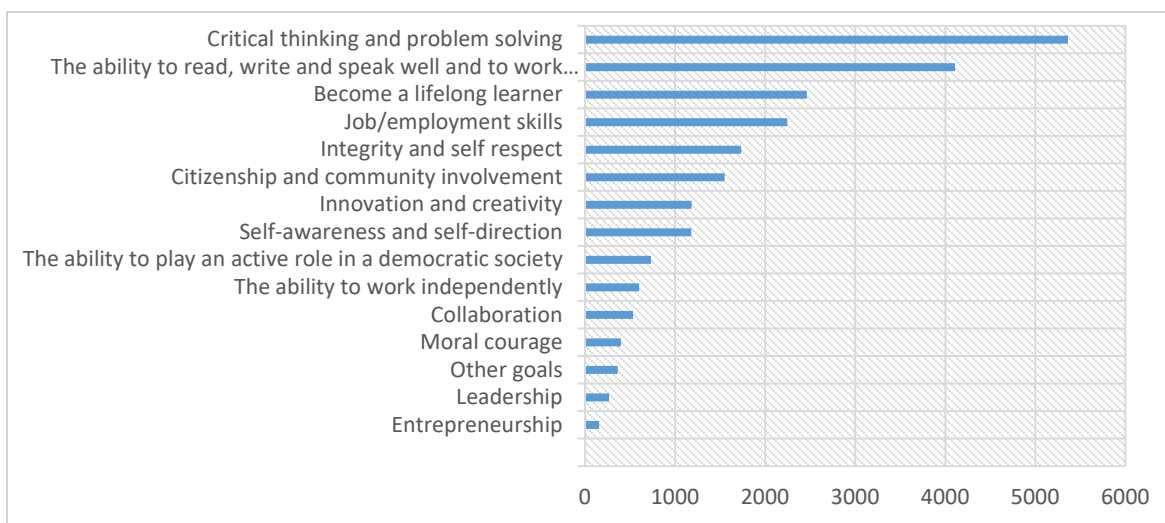
*"Essential skills for workplace success are not taught effectively. Many students are graduating from high school with an inability to function in basic math skills such as percentages, fractions, ruler sense and measurement."*

#### v. **Class sizes<sup>6</sup>**

##### **Question 3, Part 1: What do you think is most important for students to gain from their K to 12 education?**

Respondents were presented with the list below and permitted to select their top three choices, resulting in a total of 22,879 selections. Responses are presented in *Chart 2* showing most common to least common responses.

**Chart 2: What do you think is most important for students to gain from their K to 12 education?**



<sup>6</sup> See explanatory note on class size under item A on p. 14.

The most common “other goals” identified by respondents related to the following broad areas:

- Life skills  
*“Gaining more practical skills to face real life situations. Financial skills, home life skills, work skills.”*
- Academic success  
*“Mathematical and science foundations to help them cope with the outside world.”*
- Empathy, kindness, respect, and appreciation of diversity  
*“Empathy, openness to others including those with different family circumstances and backgrounds, orientations, and physical and intellectual differences.”*
- Work ethic and cross-curricular abilities  
*“The ability to work both alone (self-directed) as well as with others (collaborative), as well as life skills of all sorts (any skill needed to live alone as an adult in the modern society).”*

Question 3, Part 2 (a): **What improvements do you think are needed to better achieve these important goals?**

- i. **Critical thinking.** Improving critical thinking skills was a very common response to the question about improvements in the Manitoba education system. These skills were framed as essential to enable students to be effective, employable, productive, and responsible citizens.

*“Kids these days should start young [...] on job/employment skills like public speaking; critical thinking; problem solving; conflict management with peers; etc. These are all critical skills in the world today and the more practice at these things the better.”*

*“That there is no high standard for learning goals and this needs to be set from early years that these students are going to be entering a very competitive world for job market and need to have critical thinking skills and a high standard to reach their goals.”*

- ii. **Back to the basics.** One of the most common topics suggested for improvement was strengthening the focus on traditional academic subjects. The comments often framed these subjects as “basic” and linked math to other areas of learning such as life skills or critical thinking. Respondents making these comments often viewed achievement in these subjects as essential to everyday life (e.g., for problem solving, doing taxes, or finances).

*“Smaller class sizes at elementary, especially at the elementary level so teachers can provide more attention to students to help them build the reading, writing, and math skills necessary for them to be able to read and comprehend their world around them, critically analyze what is going on, and then problem solve with confidence.”*

*“Get back to the basics of reading, writing and math. Don’t care so much about the fluff. A student cannot think, problem solve if they cannot read and do mental math.”*

- iii. **Learning for life.** The emphasis on “skill” development was common, especially in the early years. This covered a broad range of topics and was often mentioned. In addition to math and critical thinking skills, responses were framed as life skills, basic skills, or employment skills, for example. These comments highlighted the need for students to be well prepared to function in everyday life, including at work, in teamwork, solving problems, running a household, and so on.

*“Teach them life skills they will need in the real world such as balancing a cheque book and budgeting, running a household, more teamwork skills, communication skills etc.”*

*"I think high schools need to put an emphasis on readiness for life. Learn how to budget and do taxes, proper mannerisms for (the) workplace."*

*"The modern world is quickly changing, and it is not information, but rather life skills which will help our students and children succeed in the future."*

iv. **Class sizes<sup>7</sup>.**

**Question 3, Part 2 (b): Thinking specifically about teachers and school leaders, what improvements do you think are needed to better achieve these goals?**

- v. **Teachers'/Leaders' training and PD.** One of the predominant themes raised by the respondents related to PD opportunities. Several respondents referred to the quality of the PD, its relevance to the classroom environment, as well as its effectiveness. Consideration was also given to the formal training opportunities provided by faculties of education. Some were in favour of increasing the number of training opportunities, while others questioned why there were so many days off in the school year for it. Some respondents mentioned the importance of ongoing training for teachers. Respondents are looking for well-educated teachers and school leaders.

*"I think educators need this training built into their university curriculum and in their ongoing learning, professional development. It likely needs to be more than a day or 2 of PD. It needs to be additional course work, projects to show application is occurring in the classroom setting."*

*"Teacher training and ongoing training should be carefully assessed and monitored. Many teachers have children with disabilities in their class and many teachers lack the knowledge to include, support and mentor these students. Teachers should be in a role they are suited for."*

*"Require ongoing training to maintain teacher certification, with a focus on literacy and numeracy."*

*"Teachers should be required to have preservice and ongoing courses in strategies to deal with issues that affect the learning environment. Examples differentiating instruction, classroom management, supporting students with mental health, learning and behaviour concerns."*

*"Principals/vice principals need to be able to be educational leaders in their buildings, rather than managers. Hire principals/vice principals with proper qualifications - masters, post bacs."*

*"Teachers whose classrooms are not effective need support to improve from the administration in their buildings or their divisions."*

*"Teachers need ongoing professional development."*

*"More teacher input into our current system. The increase of teacher autonomy and respect for the teaching profession. Improve the selection process and training of new teachers so effective teachers enter the classroom."*

*"More directed professional development opportunities. Many times the PD opportunities are too broad and teachers are left to flounder to find pertinent PD that is in line with the curriculum that they are expected to teach. Maybe something like a province-wide PD 'plan' – teachers are expected to take these specific courses based on a province-wide plan and goal."*

*"I think children have way too many in-service days. Could teacher's time off during school breaks not be used for professional development time?"*

<sup>7</sup> See explanatory note on class size under item A on p. 14.

- i. **Support.** Most of the comments about school leaders were phrased as “teachers and school leaders” but centered around supporting teachers. Common examples of the support required were:

- Support for teachers by school leaders; and, support for teachers and school leaders, by the board, division, community, and parents.

*“Teachers and school leaders need to be backed by a board that knows the community.”*

*“Teachers and school leaders require a team behind them and the ability to access information and required assets for every child to succeed within a reasonable amount of time (within a week not months/years).”*

- Types of support cited include time, funding, and required resources for additional training or PD to equip teachers to better teach all students including the diversity of challenging students, especially those with special needs. The need for more EAs was often noted.

*“Adequate support and training to meet the increasingly diverse needs of students entering the classrooms; flexibility in programming based on individual needs within schools and school divisions.”*

*“More PD for teachers and school leaders. Better university programming to prepare student teachers to plan for and assess a real classroom of students, and more practical experience with things like guided reading and math groups. More EA support for classrooms.”*

*“Smaller class size, more EA’s (Educational Assistants) hire more teachers for the special needs students”*

*“I truly believe that teachers and school leaders already work to the best of their potential but need to be allowed to be trained, have professional development to deal with all the special needs students, mental health issues that so many students face these days, we need to provide them with the tools to deal with all of the needs that they face each day.”*

ii. **Class sizes<sup>8</sup>.**

**Question 4: In your opinion, who is ultimately responsible for student success?**

Respondents were asked to select a single response indicating who they viewed as ultimately responsible for student success. There were 7,533 responses to this question.

Survey respondents identified both “parents” and “students themselves” as being ultimately responsible for student success, followed by “teachers” and the “Department of Education”.

**Table 13: Who is ultimately responsible for student success?**

Responsibility	Percentage
• Parents	31.58
• Students themselves	31.22
• Teachers	17.47
• Department of Education	15.68
• School boards	2.42
• Principals	1.18
• Superintendents	0.45

<sup>8</sup> See explanatory note on class size under item A on p. 14.

- i. **Student success is complex.** Many respondents disagreed with the forced choice (“choose one”) requirement of this question. They suggested student success is more complex than assigning ultimate responsibility to a single party. This is reflected in highly consistent responses within the open-ended comments about student success depending on any combination of the options listed in the question, with the importance of each varying with the age and stage of the student. The general trend was that everyone on the list has a role to play; parents and teachers have a stronger role in the early years and as students mature, they become responsible for their own success.

*“Student success is a nuanced and complex issue and ultimately there is not one individual or group who can be held solely responsible.”*

*“Everyone has to work together, but, ultimately, if the student does not want to learn and is a destructive force in their own education, even the best teacher in the world isn't going to have an impact.”*

*“This is a hard question. I think everyone listed plays an important role. There has to be some responsibility on the parents or student themselves, but most of it goes to the teachers and principals.”*

*“It is a collaboration between the educational system, parents, and the students. Responsibility needs to be taken in all aspects of a child's education.”*

- ii. **Education system.** The roles of the school boards and the education or school systems are to support teachers and students in achieving success.

*“Overall the teachers, administration, the school boards and the department of education are there to provide the money, services, and the resources that are needed to ensure that the kids succeed in K-12.”*

- iii. **Team effort.** Student success depends on a multitude of factors. This belief was reflected in comments about it taking a village or community, or requiring team effort to ensure student success.

*“It takes a community to raise a child - all of the parties indicated above play important roles in the education system and the development of our youth.”*

**Question 5(a): Thinking about the Department of Education, school boards and school divisions, are changes needed in how the school system is structured? E.g., how schools, school divisions and the department are organized? If yes, what changes do you think are needed?**

A total of 7,053 responses were received for this question. The following table shows the proportion of respondents who indicated “Yes” or “No” to a need for structural changes in the education system.

Table 14: Are changes needed in how the school system is structured?

Select one	Percentage
• Yes	42
• No	58

The suggested structural changes offered as additional comments, from the 42 percent of respondents who selected “Yes” to this question, are described below:

- i. **School divisions and school boards.** This question included many comments about the size and number of school divisions and boards, their associated costs and roles. Amalgamation was discussed frequently in this question. Common topics included:
- Divisions and boards are top heavy, and expensive. Many of the comments received about school divisions and boards were concerns about administrative costs. The perception was that many positions within the school divisions are highly paid, often redundant, with little perceived benefit from the positions. The comments often suggested reducing costs by reducing the number of administrative positions and redirecting the dollars to the classroom.

*"I feel we do not need so many school divisions, there are way too many high paid superintendents. I believe that amalgamation is needed."*

*"You need to reduce the top heavy load of all the school boards. Amalgamate and cut high salary costs of so many top people. This would allow more money to flow into the schools themselves."*

- Reduce the number of divisions and boards; amalgamate. In addition to the opinions that the divisions were "top heavy", many suggested the need to reduce the number of divisions and/or boards across the province. This was suggested to reduce costs and reduce duplication of positions. Some suggested amalgamation would reduce disparity across school divisions and increase consistency across the province.

*"There are far too many school boards and school trustees. The education system is too top heavy. There are many individuals in each school division that have very high salaries and have identical counterparts in other divisions doing the same job."*

*"Amalgamation. Let's stop wasting money on salaries and spend it on educating children."*

*"Less school divisions, more consistency among divisions as well."*

*"Amalgamate the school divisions so that efficiencies are created (all same benefits, days off, resources, etc.). Also allows for better coordination and consistencies across schools."*

*"Some consolidation of school boards so they are run the same across the province."*

- ii. **Role of boards and trustees.** The process of electing board members, their roles, and associated costs was often questioned. Changes to regulate the composition of boards were also suggested.

*"What is the role of school boards in this day and age? They have outlived their time. Eliminate the expense of having useless boards. Amalgamate more divisions. Still too many high paid superintendents and divisional staff."*

*"Less school boards, and define the roles more appropriately, in fact what is their role, do we need them? School divisions are good as those living in an area need to have school close."*

*"I think that school boards should have at least 50% teachers, principals, and professionals working in the field of education on the board, like health care boards, because they know what is going on in schools and what might be needed."*

- iii. **Take a moderate approach.** Some suggested a moderate approach to restructuring the school divisions (e.g., combining and/or reconfiguring some in urban or rural areas), if it aligned with community needs. Some commented on the benefits of smaller school divisions as better able to understand and respond to local needs.

*"EACH school has a different focus and needs and we need school boards to assess each and ensure that funding is in place to support the learners and teachers."*

*"We need local school boards who are able to assess local school and division needs. Local school boards should continue to have the say regarding school closures, programming, and school amalgamation. There still needs to be local input regarding programming. Some division amalgamations need to be done still but only when it benefits the students. Geographical size must be part of the management's structure in order to benefit students."*



- iv. **Department of Education.** Comments received about the Department were fewer. Some comments reflected the beliefs that the Department was overly bureaucratic, or ineffective. Some suggested the Department needed to govern in a manner intended to yield a higher level of consistency across the province; others suggested a more tailored approach. Most suggested the Department needed to work more closely with the divisions, schools, and teachers.

*"Too many administrators are too far removed from the classroom and lack an understanding of the changing needs of the child, the families and the teachers. They devise structures, adopt programs, and mandate testing without full understanding of the impact upon the classroom - student and teacher. Those in the Department of Education and Training need to be more connected to schools - perhaps fewer permanent positions and more seconded positions could help to achieve this. Becoming a bureaucrat who needs to please the minister is a danger in government."*

*"Too much administration and very little accountability. It's time to think outside the box and become creative with the challenges that are being faced in this day and age. What is appropriate for an inner city school may not be appropriate for other areas/school divisions. When was the last time the Minister of Education spent any time in a school? What questions are the Minister and staff asking themselves about the outcomes they expect? How are the Department, schools, and divisions defining 'education'?"*

**Question 5(b): Thinking about the Department of Education, school boards and school divisions, are changes needed in how the school system is governed? E.g., who does what and how decisions are made? If yes, what changes do you think are needed?**

The 7,054 responses received for this question were split down the middle, with 3559 respondents selecting "Yes" and 3495 selecting "No".

Table 15: Are changes needed in how the school system is governed?

Select one	Percentage
• Yes	50
• No	50

The focus areas of the comments provided for this question are described below.

- i. **School boards and school divisions.** As in the previous question, respondents commenting on governance stated that school boards were top heavy in administrative costs and that the numbers of divisions and boards could be reduced to achieve efficiencies and cost savings. Many respondents suggested the need for more accountability and for setting qualification standards for school board officials, such as education or experience in the school system, financial backgrounds, decision-making abilities, and so on. Some suggested moderate changes to the school boards and divisions.

*"School divisions are led by trustees who are seldom seen or heard from by most ratepayers, parents or students and they are making significant financial, and administrative and educational policy decisions while effectively being unaccountable to anyone."*

*"Instead of sweeping changes, review what is currently happening in every school division, what are the strengths, or weaknesses - suggest a list of necessary changes and give time for those changes."*

*"Schools and school divisions know best the needs of their students and they would know best what resources/accommodations are needed for their population."*

*"I think the school boards and such should be made up of people from our own communities that have a commendable record in their career and are well respected, and those that actually know what is best for OUR community."*

ii. **Making decisions.** The topic of decision-making was raised in relation to the need for input from the community, parents, and teachers on decision making about schools and education. Many comments



centered on the trustees making decisions with insufficient experience about the frontline work of teachers in the classroom. Many respondents indicated that “front-line” workers in the education system (i.e., teachers) are often left out of the decision-making process, resulting in changes being imposed on them without an appropriate level of consultation. There was frequent mention of the need for an increase in transparency about funding and in decision-making.

*“Schools/school boards should legitimately seek parent/community input rather than having the ‘opinion seeking’ meetings AFTER the decision has already been made.”*

*“Education is complex and school boards don’t have the expertise to make educational decisions. Valuable leadership time is spent educating school board members on the relevance of programs, rather than implementation and coherence making of initiatives throughout a division. Trustees often run on personal issues/agendas and much time is spent reminding [them] of their role.”*

*“Those who actually work in schools with students should have the greatest say in how schools are governed, as opposed to those far removed from classrooms and the reality of schools and needs today.”*

*“Teachers need to be more involved in decision making. They are on the front lines... they know more than anyone else. Would also be helpful to involve students and parents.”*

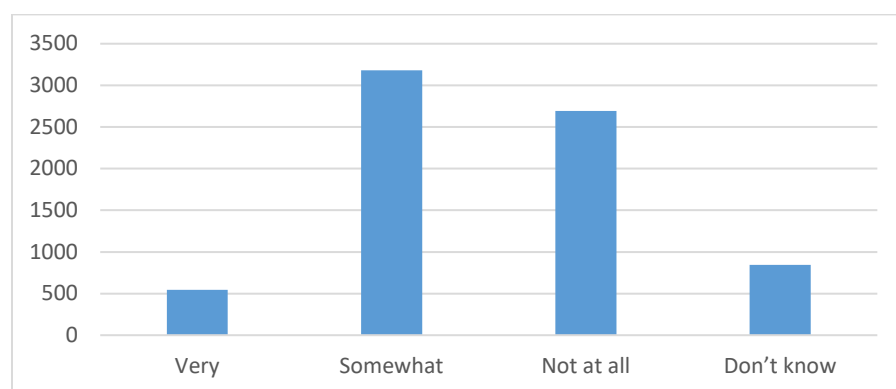
*“More transparency in how school boards and schools make decisions and are managed is needed.”*

*“Be more transparent about priorities, operating, decision making and engage your stakeholders better.”*

**Question 6 (a): In your opinion, is the education system currently: Properly funded and sustainable? What changes could improve financial sustainability?**

There were 7,262 responses to this question and the distribution perspectives is presented in *Chart 3*.

**Chart 3: Is the education system properly funded?**



- i. **Education system.** Responses to this question are like previous questions with responses being split between those who believe the education system, school divisions, and school boards should be reduced to save administrative costs; and those who prefer that the current system remains, as it allows for the best use of funding/financial resources.

*“Better management, significantly less overlap, for example all the school divisions with the multitude of redundant bureaucracy wastes significant \$\$\$\$.”*

*“Do not change how our schools and school divisions are run- adopt the mindset that funding programming for youth both in and out of school makes a difference.”*

*“I believe that by decreasing the trustees and potentially the number of superintendents we would have more money for grass roots that support kids.”*

- ii. **Funding.** The discussion about funding mostly concerned the effects of government cuts, although a few suggested the need to increase government funding. Many suggested reducing funding from taxes, or changing the funding models and formulas.

*“Increased government spending focused on the areas/school divisions that need it the most.”*

*“Stop cutting funding and drawing up plans for amalgamating the school divisions again.”*

*“Collect school taxes as a whole and divide equally among divisions vs. Current system where the schools in the richer areas receive more funding due to higher property taxes.”*

*“Education needs increased funding. Cutting jobs, freezing wages or increasing class sizes will drive teachers out of the province (as happened in large amounts in Manitoba during the 1990s). Investing in education is the best return for the province, as it will reduce poverty, increase employment and result in more taxes for the government due to higher wages.”*

- iii. **Taxes.** Comments received about property taxes suggested changing how the education system is funded to decrease reliance on property taxes and have more of the education funding come from the provincial government. Many comments mentioned the need to redistribute funds more equitably across divisions; a few called for an increase to school taxes as an investment in future citizens.

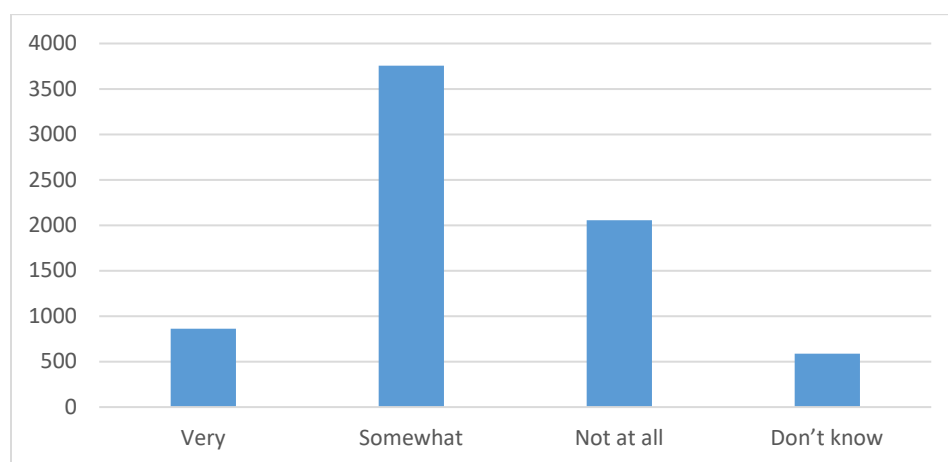
*“Keep municipal taxes on the property tax bill but increase provincial funding and regulate the maximum increases a school division can have.”*

*“Education is the best investment we can make for our future, don’t lower school taxes, raise them to properly fund a strong educational system that works for everyone wealthy or not.”*

**Question 6 (b): In your opinion, is the education system currently: Providing equitable learning outcomes for all students? What changes could improve equitable learning outcomes for all students?**

There were 7,262 responses to this question and the distribution perspectives is presented in *Chart 4*.

**Chart 4:** Is the education system providing equitable learning outcomes for all students?



- i. **Changes to improve learning outcomes.** Many comments in this response suggested learning outcomes depend on the student and the teacher and thus changes to improve equitable learning outcomes for all students were difficult to define; rather, learning outcomes would need to be defined individually. Some respondents suggested schools and teachers were doing their best and called for investment of more resources to meet this goal, meaning resources both within the school system and outside of it to address social issues such as mental health and poverty.

*"...the learning outcomes from our most marginalized students are in peril if the government does not recognize how interconnected socio-economic indicators of a student impacts their learning and level of success."*

*"Many students come to school experiencing challenges that interfere with their learning. The system needs to provide supports to address issues around health, abuse, mental health, poverty, etc. to enable children to fully access educational experiences."*

*"Eliminate barriers to students and families before they even enter the schools. Help eliminate poverty. Smaller class sizes. Increase supports in the classroom. Make it easier for students to receive EA support, outside assessments, and help. Our schools are forced to take on more and more students with a wide variety of needs that our schools are not equipped nor trained to handle. More mental health support for students."*

*"I think there will always be some inequities with Rural and Urban, but in MB I think the SDs work really hard to provide every child with the best learning outcomes they can provide."*

*"We've known for decades that you can look at a Kindergarten class and make reasonably accurate predictions about where the students will be in their grade 12 class when they graduate based on their parents' Socio-Economic Status. If we actually want to do something about the lack of equity, we have to take socio-economic status seriously. If we don't, this entire process is a complete waste of time."*

*"As I mentioned above, the research from the Manitoba Centre for Health Policy shows that the main reason students who do not do well is out of the control of schools, but has to do with poverty. So the province should invest in policies that get at the root causes of poverty like social housing, low cost public transportation, \$15 minimum wage, good mental health supports so that families are supported and then their children will do better."*

*"More provincial spending is required to provide students with resources to overcome challenges they face at home, whether those challenges are financial or other. This includes provincial funding for food programs, counselling services, after school clubs, alternate curriculum and programs, to name a few."*

*"Students that are from poorer families or that experience other types of marginalization (e.g. are Indigenous) are still more likely to experience diminished success compared to peers. The education system can and needs to be an effective equalizer and give all students equitable opportunities to succeed. Government and school boards should be acting on the recommendations of marginalized communities for how the education system can better meet the needs of children and youth from those communities."*

*"Get rid of school fundraising because it creates inequality. Wealthier parents can afford to pick up the shortfall in funding for trips, sports, music, etc. An equitable system means that ALL schools have the money for these things without the need for parental support."*

*"Increased resources to reduce poverty, not just in education, across all sectors of government."*

- ii. **Special needs and learning disabilities.** Much of the discussion about students with special needs and students with learning disabilities was around the need for more support—for the students and for the teachers in the classroom—as well as providing teachers with more support to know how best to support and encourage these children to learn. Respondents suggested this would benefit all students in the classroom by freeing the teacher to spend more time with all students. There were some comments about inclusion of students with learning disabilities and special needs in the regular classroom resulting in poor outcomes for all of the students.

*“With the growing number of children coming into school with special needs, behavior needs, learning disabilities and just lack of desire to learn, school funding needs to reflect these needs so that all students are able to learn to their ability.”*

*“More funding for special needs students would allow for them to work to the best of their abilities, (as they will be the ones having the most issues when leaving school) and also allow the teachers to concentrate on the whole class.”*

- iii. **Schools and school divisions.** Comments about schools and school divisions centered on inconsistent funding and learning opportunities across schools and school divisions, affecting learning outcomes. Differences between rural, northern, and urban schools were noted.

*“This is really hard to say because so much of learning outcomes is based on the input of each division’s administration, as well as the socio-economic makeup of the students and families that attend each school.”*

*“There is certainly a huge difference in courses and experiences available to urban vs rural students (many more opportunities available to urban students).”*

iv. **Class sizes<sup>9</sup>.**

**Question 7: Additional Comments: Please provide any additional comments you wish to share in this space.**

- i. **Education or school system.** Topics raised about the education system or school system within the additional comments section are diverse, with relatively low frequency for any specific topic. Responses often overlap with topics raised in previous questions, and include:

- Challenges teachers face coping with diverse student needs (new immigrants, mental health, poverty) while meeting students’ learning needs.

*“The school system needs far more help in the areas of mental health and special needs.”*

- Changing how the system is funded and governed (involving the public more and being more accountable and transparent in decisions).

*“Scrap the ability for school boards to tax, evenly distribute the funding through the whole province via fewer school boards (more area per board to balance it out).”*

- ii. **School divisions, school boards.** Most of the comments received in the additional comments section overlap with topics commonly raised in the previous questions about school divisions and school boards. Consistent with the previous questions, respondents were divided in their opinions about reducing (to save costs) or retaining (to maintain local voice) the number of divisions and boards.

*“I am vehemently opposed to the reduction in the number of school divisions as this would result in an increase in size of my division and that would mean that it would become more difficult to have my voice heard.”*

<sup>9</sup> See explanatory note on class size under item A on p. 14.

*“Our teachers need to have the ability to educate as to the needs of their students/classroom; we need to get back to the important basics in our curriculums (STEM) and economics and get rid of the fluff; we need to bring back standardized testing to know how we measure to other jurisdictions; and we need to remove the school divisions to minimize the administration and bureaucracy and replace with a single, elected provincial board.”*

### Other Topics not as Prevalent in Other Questions

- Comments concerning sexual health education (most stated it was insufficient with respect to LGBTQ students and families).

*“The school system is failing non-binary, queer, two spirit, and transgender children and families.”*

- Suggestions to look at other education models (e.g., international systems where students achieve a high level of success); others suggest not looking at other systems (like Ontario) as this would be a step backwards; some talk about setting goals for the future.

*“This review should focus on supporting excellence and looking to other school systems in Canada and beyond for ideas.”*

- Some respondents were especially appreciative of the education system and stated little change was required; others suggested change was necessary and were hopeful that the review would accomplish that.

*“I believe the best approach would be to leave school divisions alone, support teachers, enhance curriculum and look at the underlying factors that impact a student's ability to learn.”*

*“I hope this review will view the education system through the lens of a variety of students in our system to truly see how the moving parts impact their daily education.”*

*“I look forward to the results of this study and hope for innovative improvements in our education system.”*

